

The Inbound Buyer



Introduction

The way humans think when buying something is very predictable. If you understand the thought process your buyers go through, you can offer them help at the right time and assist them to move through the buyer's journey.

When we are buying, the way we distinguish between marketing and sales is very simple. We are either in dialogue with someone on a one-to-one basis, or we are absorbing something that we know is one-to-many.

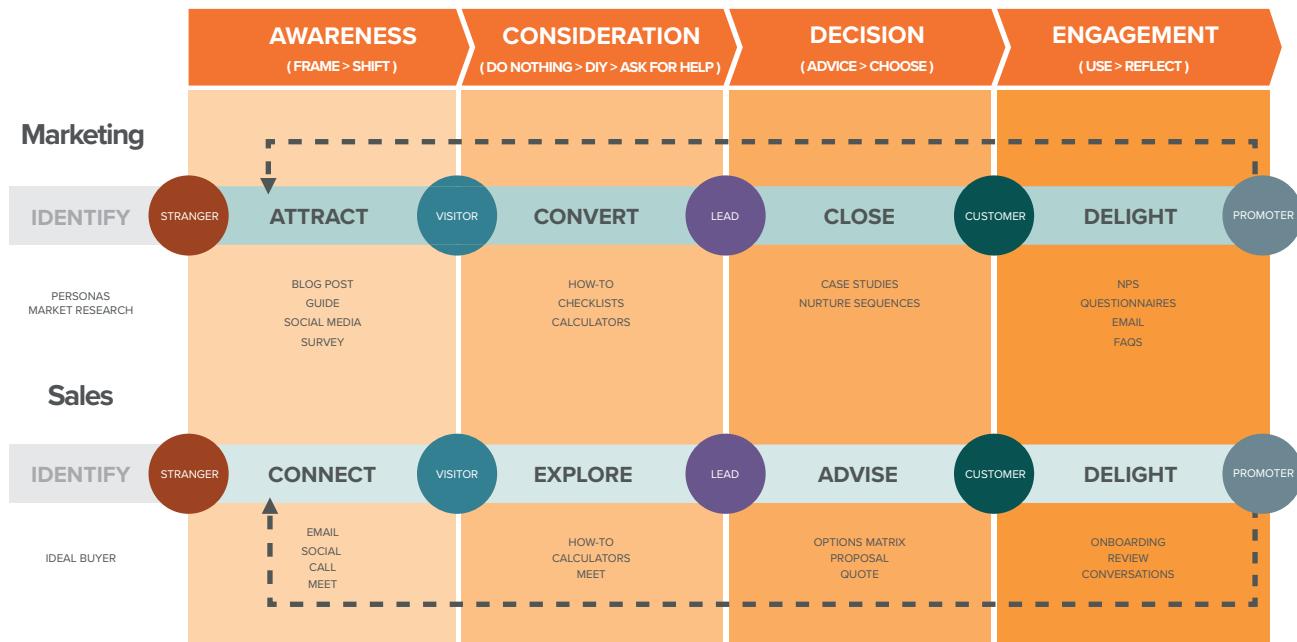
That's pretty much it. What we want in both cases is for the communication to be relevant to us, and what we need at this point in our journey. We don't want to waste time covering old ground, and we don't want to be pushed forward to a stage in the journey we aren't ready for yet. For example, if I'm looking at pricing, I'm ready to buy, I'm not looking for a big solution sell. That said, if I'm looking for answers - to frame my problem, I'm not ready to choose a payment plan.

Remember, in both Marketing and Sales, you are not in control of this process, the buyer is. If you want to engage with the buyer, you need to meet them where they are now, and help them through the next steps.

In this guide we look at the buyer's journey in more depth and map it to the inbound marketing and inbound sales methodologies to tie everything together.

The buyer's journey is usually described in three stages: Awareness, Consideration, and Decision. As we are all now more enlightened by Inbound, we add Engagement to the journey, so we can continue to Delight our new customers to become Promoters. And if you're going to do the job properly, you should include the planning stage of Identify too. Confused? Don't be.

Here's your handy visual guide for aligning Marketing and Sales with the Inbound Buyer.



By  babelquest

Stage 1: Awareness

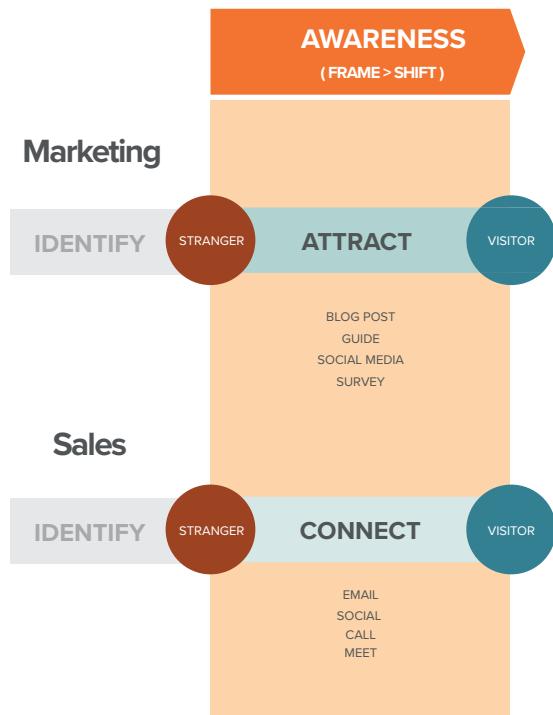
Awareness is about the buyer's challenges, to engage here you Frame and Shift.

"Frame"

Frame the buyer's challenge. Label or define their problem or opportunity based on the symptoms they are experiencing. Establish commonality between you and the buyer by describing the problem in their language.

"Shift"

Offer your help or advice. Help the prospect to commit to considering all the available ways to solve their challenge. This stage is also very important for you to disqualify any prospects who aren't the right fit for your product or service. It's a little easier with marketing, as a prospect who gets halfway through a blog and doesn't feel any commonality will move on to another Google search. However, in a sales conversation, if you qualify that they aren't a good fit for you, be prepared to point them in another direction, and politely bail out.



Activities at this stage:

Marketing

- Blogs, social media messages, guides, surveys

Sales

- Outreach activity, connection attempts (email, calls, social media, in person), opening conversations

Stage 2: Consideration

Consideration has three steps. Do Nothing, DIY, and Ask for Help.

"Do Nothing"

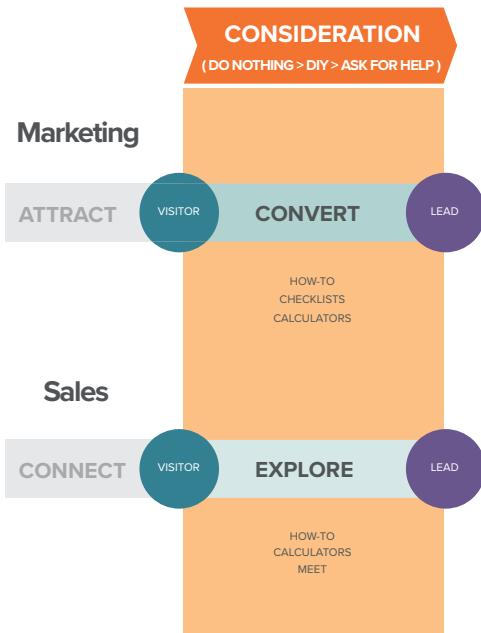
Before we make a decision to truly consider something, we weigh it up against all of our other priorities. Our natural reaction is to put it off, procrastinate. We are all busy enough without adding more to our list of things to do. This is often a very tough place to move the buyer on from. Use 'Constructive Tension' to help the buyer increase the priority of what you want them to consider. This can be done by increasing standards, changing the task, or boosting accountability. For really difficult situations, you can bring some bad news to show that the status quo is unsafe, and create contrast between the future results of doing nothing now, and their desired outcomes.

"DIY"

As a Buyer, we naturally incline towards trying to fix a problem ourselves before asking for help (and paying for it). The DIY stage is another big sticking point. Can you help the buyer work out how to fix the problem themselves? Traditional sellers shy away from this, not wanting to give away their 'secret sauce'. But this is another good point for disqualifying a lead if the fit is poor. If the buyer can go away and solve something by themselves, are they the right fit for you anyway? You can use constructive tension here to move things along here too - for example "how good does this have to be? Is the DIY option good enough, or does it need to be better?"

"Ask for help"

Buyers are often worried about asking a daft question, wasting someone's time, or being 'sold to'. Sometimes they need to know it's ok to ask. Lean in and offer help, ask a few questions to make sure you are right about the buying stage they are at, and tailor your message about how you can help them and who else you've helped. The key elements to this should be "when we talk to people like you, we find they're great at 'this', and really struggling with 'that'. We fix 'that'." You need to personalise what you say and be clear on how you help, so the buyer can understand and rationalise why they should decide to buy from you.



Activities at this stage:

Marketing

- How-to guides, checklists, calculators

Sales

- Build constructive tension through conversations and use marketing materials to reinforce what you are talking about (see above)

Stage 3: Decision

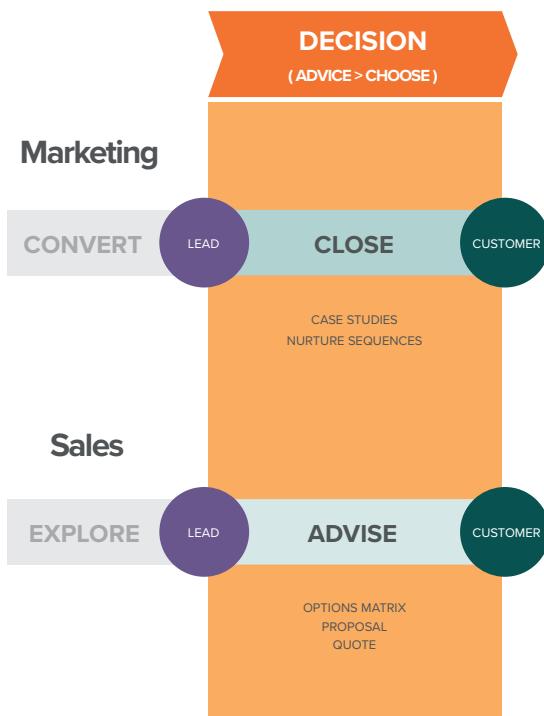
Get advice, and choose options.

"Get Advice"

It's time to show the buyer how getting help would work for them. At this point the communication becomes even more personalised. The buyer wants to receive advice tailored to their needs, so you should recap what you've learned so far to check your understanding, check to see if anything has already changed, and then present your proposal for addressing the problem together.

"Choose options"

If the final decision comes down to Yes or No, we can feel pressured into buying, and we instinctively back off. Creating more options than Yes/No (at least A, B or No) helps the buyer remain in the conversation. Being prepared here can help you avoid negotiating on price, and steer towards the right fit instead. If you are still meeting resistance, what did you miss along the journey? Has something changed? Ask questions that help you get back to the right point in the journey where you can help them move forward again. **Buyers can move backwards through their journey as well as forwards.**



Activities at this stage:

Marketing

- Nurture sequences, case studies

Sales

- Options matrix, personalised proposal / quote

Stage 4: Engagement

At this stage, the buyer uses their purchase, and reflects on it.

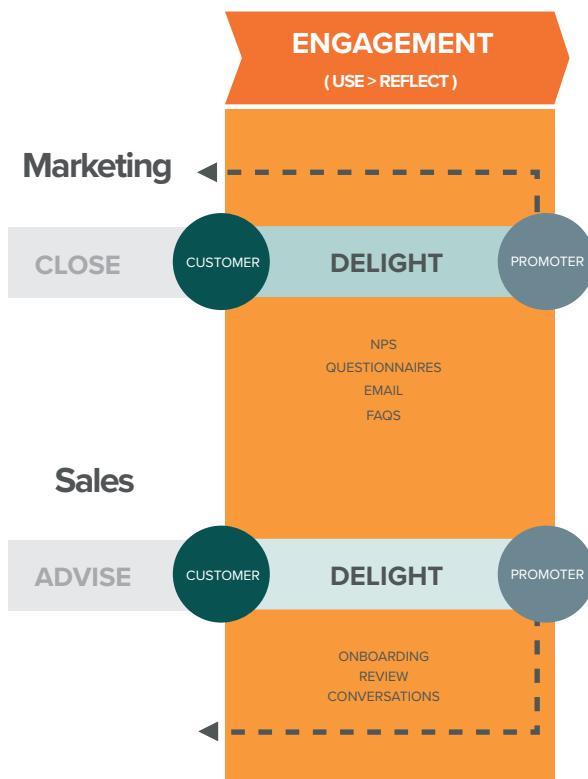
The journey certainly doesn't end at the sale. Remember that your best prospects will often be referred to you by a third party, so your customer care needs to be as consistent as your marketing and sales process.

"Use"

The natural next step from a purchase is to get stuck in and use the product, getting to grips with it in reality. An onboarding process that matches the quality of the communication with the buyer so far is crucial when moving into the 'delight' stage and engaging with the customer beyond the point of sale. They may still be looking for help making the most of their purchase or working through any initial issues.

"Reflect"

Once a customer has had time to use the product, it's important to encourage them to reflect on how things have changed since you helped them to solve their problem. This helps them to really understand the value they have gained, whether there is anything more you can do, if they should refer you, and if they would be willing to feature in one of your case studies.



Activities at this stage:

Marketing

- Events, NPS surveys, questionnaires, email, FAQs, user guides

Sales

- Onboarding process, conversations, review

Where are you now?

AWARENESS
(FRAME > SHIFT)

CONSIDERATION
(DO NOTHING > DIY > ASK FOR HELP)

DECISION
(ADVICE > CHOOSE)

ENGAGEMENT
(USE > REFLECT)

Now that you understand the four stages of the buyer journey, take a second to ask yourself these questions:

- Have you identified the need for inbound in your business?
- Have you considered how much of a priority it is?
- Do you need help, advice, or options?

No matter where you are in your journey, we'd like to offer our help.



Click below to book a free coaching session with me,

↗ <https://app.hubspot.com/meetings/eric1>



or book into our next Inbound Fundamentals workshop, for in-depth help in getting your first inbound campaign launched.

↗ <https://wwwbabelquest.co.uk/inbound-fundamentals-training-registration>

Your next step:

We've walked you through the finer details of the journey of the inbound buyer, now it's time to put that into practice by applying it to your own communications.

You will find a blank worksheet at the back of this guide for you to go through and fill out, to help you consider how you will deal with each of the stages within your own business.

